

## ELIPH' HEWLITT IN THE FOUR HUNDRED

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER.

The front door was evidently one of those front doors that are opened only on special occasions. Eliph' Hewlitt went around the house and knocked at the back door. It was Monday morning, and when the door opened a rush of steam poured out into the frosty air; it was also wash day. The little book agent with the sandy whiskers put his foot over the sill, so that the door could not be shut in his face, and smiled. If there is a time to smile it is when you are trying to sell a book to a woman who is at work doing the family wash.

"Lady of the house in?" inquired Eliph' Hewlitt.

"I don't want no books," snapped the hook-nosed woman, trying to close the door. "Who do you think I am, anyhow? The hired girl?"

"You don't mean to tell me that you are Mrs. Smithers?" cried Eliph' Hewlitt, with pleased surprise. "Is it possible that you are the Mrs. Smithers, your dear pastor told me was the president of the Curleyville Culture club?"

"Well, I'm her," said the woman. "I don't take it no compliment that you took me for a hired girl, neither. I may look like one in this rig, but if you don't like it—"

"Ma'am," said Eliph' Hewlitt, "you'll pardon me, I took you for your daughter. I wasn't looking for one so young to be the president of a culture club. I admit freely that you fooled me. It reminds me of the time I dined with Mrs. Vandergould, on Fifth avenue, in the city of New York, U. S. A. But you may think it strange that a book agent should dine with the four hundred as they are called in the press, although the number is erroneously stated."

"If you want to know what I think, I don't think nothing no book agent never does is strange," said Mrs. Smithers. "and I don't care who Mrs. Vandergould lets eat with her. Some folks ain't as particular as others. But no book agent eats at the same table as me; not if I know it. I draw the line somewhere."

"Well, ma'am," said the book agent, "I won't deceive you. I wasn't a book agent when I took food with Mrs. Vandergould at her house with the four hundred and eighteen—that being the correct number. No ma'am, I was a common plumber, and the very minute Mr. Vandergould asked me to dine with them I was down under the washbasins in the kitchen on a Monday morning mending the pipes, which had sprung a leak. That's why I like to visit ladies in their kitchens on wash days. I like the smell of the steam. It reminds me of that day, which I may call the day that made a new man of me. Yes, ma'am."

The hook-nosed woman curled her lips scornfully.

"Lies!" she said. "Just book agent lies! Don't tell me that a man like Mr. Vandergould would be in his kitchen on wash day morning! What would he be doing there, I'd like to know?"

"What, indeed," said Eliph' Hewlitt, "but speaking to his wife, who was doing the wash?"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Smithers. "And I wish you would either come in or go out," she added, "and not keep this door open, and all this cold air come in."

"I'll come in," said Eliph' cheerfully. "I never do unless I'm asked, but since you insist I won't refuse. I said the same to Mr. Vandergould when he asked me to dinner that day. Mr. Van-

dergould, I said, 'I don't crowd in where I'm not wanted, but since you say the party won't be a success unless I come, why, come I will, and I did.'

The book agent seated himself on one of the yellow wooden chairs and laid the oilcloth covered parcel that he had carried under his arm upon his knee.

"You see, Mrs. Smithers," he said, "Mr. Vandergould knew I was a man of culture. I thought I'd wear the blue overalls of a plumber, just as I can see that under that blue calico wrapper—which is very becoming to a woman of your complexion—is a woman of culture. And this," he said, tapping the parcel on his knee, "is why he knew me to be a man of culture. My grandmother was a Van Dolsen of Van Dolsenville, Long Island."

"I don't care who your grandmother was," said Mrs. Smithers, "nor your grandfather, neither. But if you can tell me why a lady like Mrs. Vandergould was doing her own washing you'll do more than I guess you can."

"And you can say that when with my own eyes I see Mrs. Smithers, the president of the Curleyville Culture club, doing her own washing," said Eliph' Hewlitt, blandly, "and if I ask you why Mrs. Smithers, president of the Curleyville Culture club is doing her own washing, I know what you will say. You will say, 'Servants.' You will say, 'Servants are the base of a woman's life.' You will say, 'Toll me where I can get a good servant in these awful days and you will no longer see Mrs. Smithers, president of the Curleyville Culture club, doing her own washing.' And that was what Mrs. Vandergould said to me, 'Mr. Hewlitt,' she said, 'servants.' That was what she said. 'Mr. Hewlitt,' she said, 'for six weeks I have not had a servant in the house, and I must have the table linen done for this evening's grand soiree. I may have a bad temper,' she said, 'and may speak harsh to the help when I have any,' she says, 'but the help a person is compelled to put up with in these days is enough to give an angel a bad temper. You are surprised,' she says, 'to see me, a perfect lady and the boss of the so-called Four Hundred doing my own washing, but if you don't like it, please tell me where I can get a servant. I have tried,' she says, 'and Reginaldo has tried,' she says, 'and we have brought them home from the intelligence offices by thousands, and they give one look at the six weeks' soiled linen piled up here,' she says, 'and they go.' And you, Mrs. Smithers, knowing your own sweet temper, can understand why a woman with the temper of Mrs. Vandergould should be doing her own washing, when servants are what they are."

"They are ungrateful things," said Mrs. Smithers, heartily. "The last one I had—her name was Maggie—"

"That was the name of my dear grandmother," interposed the little man quickly. "Maggie Van Dolsen, and a millionaire in her own right, but it all went in gold mine stock, but not until she had bought a copy of—"

"I don't want to hear about your grandmother," said Mrs. Smithers, bluntly. "All I ask you is how the Vandergoulds come to ask you to dinner?"

"My grandmother, she bought," said Eliph' Hewlitt. "Well, ma'am, I'll skip my grandmother. There I was under the wash tubs with a soldering iron in one hand and a force pump in the other, and all of me that Mr. Vandergould could see when he came into the kitchen was the ends of my legs. He came in hurriedly and stepped on one of my feet, 'Odella,' he said to his wife, 'there's the dickens to pay,' for you know, ma'am," said Eliph', "some of the Four Hundred use strong language when excited. 'What's up, Reginaldo?'"



asks his wife. 'What's up?' he says. 'Plenty is up, and the party tonight is ruined!' Billy Bradleaf, the cut-up of the Four Hundred, and our only genius, has took the measles and can't come. Here I have gone and ordered the monkeys and Billy is the only one that knows how to manage monkeys at a party. Here I have gone and ordered the trained and educated pigs, and Billy is the only one that can handle them so as to make a special parlor function of them. Here is Billy got the measles and no one else in the Four Hundred able to provide a pleasant evening's entertainment, consisting of tricks, games, readings from the world's great authors, anecdotes both wise and witty, golden words from the greatest pulpit orators, and, in fact, everything necessary to enliven the evening home circle, the church entertainment or the social event. Where can I get another man to suggest and carry out one thousand and one admirable parlor tricks and games, including charades, games of skill, sleight of hand, etc., to amuse the guests the way Billy Bradleaf does? At that Mrs. Vandergould threw up her hands and the tears came into her eyes. 'Reginaldo,' she says, 'the party is ruined.' 'I know it, alas,' says he, 'and tomorrow morning the papers will be full of the shame of the Vandergoulds. Where, oh, where, can I find a man that knows everything from how to care for monkeys in the drawing room to how to play bean bags? Where can I find a man who can quote the prose and poetical gems of all ages, the lives of all the great men from Adam to Roosevelt, with the dying words of them that is dead, as well as converse on one thousand and one subjects with the educated pig and horse? Where can I find such a storehouse of helpful hints and novelties for all occasions of mirth, pleasure and relaxation?'"

"Well, ma'am," said Eliph' Hewlitt, slowly unwrapping the book he held, "when Mrs. Vandergould heard this she turned on him. 'Reginaldo,' she says, 'there is no such man in the world except Billy Bradleaf, who has the measles. It is because his head is a real encyclopaedia of knowledge and compendium of literature, science and art that he is one of the Four Hundred, even though he was but an agent for Doolittle's Waterproof Sausage. Oh, would that some man, even though he was but this humble plumber, on whose foot you have but recently stepped, had such a knowledge as him into the Four Hundred, and our party would be a success!'"

"When I heard that," said Eliph' Hewlitt, turning to the allegorical frontispiece of his book and caressing it lovingly, "I wriggled out from under the tubs, and stood up and bowed to Mrs. Vandergould. 'Madam,' I said, 'my grandmother was a Van Dolsen, and though I am but a plumber, she was once a millionaire in her own right, but she is now dead, and all she had to leave to her affectionate grandson was a book. But,' I said, 'that book was a copy of Jarby's Encyclopaedia of Knowledge and Compendium of Literature, Science and Art, with information on one thousand and one subjects, twenty thousand references in all, from A to Z. Yes, lady and gent.' I said, 'I am but a humble plumber, and I have been mending your wash tubs, but I have studied this noble volume, and I have learned it by heart from How to Do Tricks, Sleight of Hand, Play Five Hundred Parlor Games, Charades, Games of Skill, etc., to the Care and Study of Animals, Wild and Domestic, including Monkeys, Cats, Pigs, Horses and all the others. I have learned from it how to Pro-

vide a Pleasant Evening Entertainment, Consisting of Readings from the World's Great Authors, and, in fact, everything necessary to enliven the home circle, the church entertainment or the social event. Every subject known to man is condensed into this one volume. If I can help you, call on me.'"

"For a minute," said Eliph' Hewlitt, turning the book so that the allegorical frontispiece of Mrs. Smithers, Mrs. Vandergould was like one stunned, and then her husband grasped my hand and cried out 'Saved!' and inside of half an hour I was up in his boudoir trying on one of his seven dress suits."

"And how was the party?" asked Mrs. Smithers.

"I may say it was a success," said "Eliph' Hewlitt modestly, "as any occasion must be when Jarby's Encyclopaedia of Knowledge and Compendium of Literature, Science and Art is in the home. Containing as it does all the information to make man, woman or child proficient in social customs, from the Guide to Conversation, with five hundred topics suggested, to the Grammar of Etiquette or Synopsis of Social Forms, it made my way easy and the party a success. The papers said it was the best dinner party ever given on Fifth avenue, and every member of the Four Hundred wanted a copy of Jarby's Encyclopaedia of Knowledge and Compendium of Literature, Science and Art as soon as they heard me speak of it, and in order that one and all might have the same advantages as the members of the Four Hundred Jarby & Goss have brought out the volume I should you identical in every way with the copies lying on the parlor tables of the aristocracy of New York, but sold at the small price of five dollars, neatly bound in cloth; one dollar on delivery and one dollar a month until paid, to all who believe in true culture. We aim to sell no others. I call only on those who are recommended to me as persons of exceptional refinement. If you would care to glance over the volume I should be glad to show it to you."

"If you don't mind," said Mrs. Smithers, politely.

"Now this," said Eliph' Hewlitt, "is the allegorical frontispiece in three colors!"

## HE ALSO HAD TROUBLE.

(Washington Star.)

They were telling dreams at the Sunrise club the other morning, and the Irreverent Man sprung a new one. He said: "I dreamed I was in heaven the other night."

"I was," said a dreamer, "chanted the other members in chorus."

"That's all right," said the Man, "I was safe inside the gate and having a friendly chat with St. Peter, when there came a knock, and the warden opened it. There was the most disreputable-looking darkey out there you ever saw. Peter said to him: 'Well, what do you want to come in for?'"

"Yassir, yassir," said the applicant, "I see powerful anxious 't come in year, but I see 'frail you all won't let me."

"What's the matter?" said Peter, not unkindly.

"Well, I see 'blegged 't confess, sir, I see a thimble in my eye."

"Well, well, well," said the old saint. "I'm sorry to hear that. What have you been doing?"

"Kain't help it, sir," said the penitent darkey. "I see des' a nachel-born chicken thief."

"St. Peter brightened up at that. 'Come on in,' he said, 'I can sympathize with you fully. I had trouble with a rooster down there myself.'"

## A TIP.

(Houston Post.)

An epulent fellow named Binz said: "This game of draw poker begins. And ends in a pile."

Added to all the while: The game's only fun when you win."

## The Lay Figure

It occurred between three and four o'clock in the afternoon.

As the roar of the maelstrom ceases at the still of the flooded tide, so that of the great Stock Exchange had died in silence, and a hundred and one brokers had hastened from the littered floor and sped away to their respective offices to balance the work of a busy day.

Mr. Thomas Debbis, head of Debbis & Co., bond brokers, was no exception to the above. A lithe little man approaching seventy, punctilious in business, eccentric by nature, a man of numerous harmless whims and inviolable habits, he had tramped away to the first floor of an office building in Broadway, nearly within a stone's throw of Wall street. For upward of twenty years he had done the same thing daily, at the same hour, under the same influences, and with the same nervous, jerky haste.

It was close upon four o'clock, however, when Mr. Felix Boyd, with his arm locked through that of Jimmie Coleman, the central office man, sauntered from Wall street into the building. They scarce had turned the corner when Coleman abruptly exclaimed:

"Look yonder, Felix! Why that crowd!"

Boyd's listless gray eyes took on a sharper gleam.

"Something wrong," he rejoined tersely. "Get a move on, Jimmie. One of my clients has his office in that building—firm of Debbis & Co., bond-brokers. Let's learn what's up."

The street and sidewalk fronting the building were thronged with a jostling crowd of excited men and boys, the majority of whom were prevented from entering by two stalwart policemen on the steps of the broad vestibule that gave ingress to the main corridor. As they elbowed their way through the crowd, however, both Coleman and Felix Boyd were recognized by the officers. Boyd mounted the steps in advance of his companion.

"What's wrong here, Donald?" said one of the officers.

"Murder, sir. Mr. Debbis, of the firm."

"How long ago?" interrupted Boyd.

"Scarce five minutes, sir."

"Who's here?"

"Detective Akerman and Sergeant Kane, of Station—"

"Stop a bit, Jimmie! See what you can learn from those men. I'll look further."

The several men referred to were grouped just within the corridor, where they stood excitedly discussing the shocking affair, and, upon receiving

Coleman's nod of compliance, Boyd hastened into the building.

At the left of the corridor were the quarters of Debbis & Co., consisting of several connected rooms, three of which opened into the corridor, the interior of all being the private office of Mr. Thomas Debbis. On the opposite side of the corridor were the offices of Cushman & Brooks, insurance agents, with those of a cotton-broker farther to the rear.

Some forty feet from the street door was the elevator well, enclosed with an iron grating, through which the car could be plainly seen as it rose and fell, while occupants of the car could easily view the corridor and main stairway, a banking institution of yond the elevator well, around which it wound to the several floors above. Beyond the foot of the stairs, however, which rose at a right angle from the corridor, were several offices nearer the rear of the building and an exit into a back street.

Above the quarters of Debbis & Co. were located the rooms and deposit-vaults of the Thordyke Trust company, with a banking institution of high repute; while directly opposite on the second floor were the rooms of Curley & Hixon, custom tailors, recently brought into general notice by their extensive advertising.

Hastening to the stairs mentioned, Boyd quickly made his way through the group gathered there, consisting chiefly of clerks from the rear offices, all of whom stood gazing with awed eyes and blanched cheeks up the broad stairway.

Some twelve feet up the stairs at a point where they turned sharply around the elevator well, lay the dead body of Thomas Debbis, with his skull crushed.

A physician, one Dr. Hardy, was kneeling beside the body, of which he was making a hurried examination. Detective Akerman and a sergeant of police were standing nearby, while on the stairs above were several men from the second-floor offices, peering down at the shocking picture. It was one to curdle the blood and sicken the stoutest heart. In no observer's face was there left a vestige of color. Shrinking eyes and gray lips evinced the mute horror of one and all.

Yet one figure there stood out in vivid contrast with all the rest. Its red lips were persistent smile. Its glassy eyes had a fixed and vacant stare. Its waxy cheeks were tinged with a ruddy hue. Its fashion-plate attire, its attitude of unconcern, its absolute immobility, seemed indeed to mock the lifeless heap of clay on the stone stairs some two feet below.

For the figure occupied a sort of platform, or raised niche formed by an angle of the stairway wall, and a placard at its feet told the story. It was what is known as a lay figure, such as is seen in store windows, and it was designed to attract attention of persons passing through the lower corridor or descending the stairs or elevator.

It was one of the advertising schemes of Messrs Curley & Hixon, the custom-tailors on the second floor. As he elbowed his way through the throng in the corridor and about the elevator, one glance at the inanimate form of the stricken broker seemed to stir all the latent energy of Felix Boyd. At such a time, when serving any of his numerous employers, Boyd suffered neither detectives nor police to stand in his way. Yet he cried sharply as he sprang up the stairs: "This man, Debbis was one of my clients, Akerman. When was this crime discovered, and what have you learned about it?"

His voice fell upon the general stillness with a ring that drew the attention of every hearer, and necks were immediately craned, and eyes opened wider under the sudden swell of intensified interest.

"Ah, it is you, Mr. Boyd!" exclaimed Akerman. "It's dead lucky, too, that you are here. The body was found less than five minutes ago, Mr. Boyd, robbed of a big batch of bonds, and as dead as—"

"Hold on there!" shouted Boyd, suddenly swinging around. "Stop that elevator. Take nobody up or down. Don't make a trip with that car until I give you permission. And you, sergeant, stop any person who attempts to descend these stairs before I have a look at the evidence here. Who found this body, Akerman?"

"The elevator boy."

"Where were you at the time?" demanded Boyd sharply, turning to that young man, who was at the foot of the stairs.

"Coming down in the elevator. I happened to glance through the grating and saw the body lying there."

"How long had you been up?"

"Only about a minute, sir."

"Did you notice these stairs on your way up?"

"Don't think I did, sir."

"Then the body, for all you know, may have been there when you ascended?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you give the alarm at once?"

"I did, sir."

"Did you see any person coming up or down these stairs just before you saw the body, or immediately afterward?"

"I did not, sir. There was nobody else on the stairs."

"Call one of Debbis' clerks out here—at once!" cried Boyd, and who was with the rapidity of Gatling gun. "I am Mr. Debbis' bookkeeper," said an elderly man, leaving the throng in the lower corridor and mounting a few stairs. "My name is Caxton. I know that Mr. Debbis left his office only six or seven minutes ago."

"Did you see him leave?"

"No, sir, but I heard him. He was in his private office and I heard him go out and close the door. That is the door there, sir, opposite the foot of these stairs."

From his elevated position on the stairs, Boyd glanced sharply over the heads of the crowd in the corridor, and saw that the door mentioned was closed, also the plain glass transom above it. For the bare fraction of a second he stood like a man suddenly transfixed, with eyes aglow and his clean-cut, forceful features tensely drawn. Yet when he reverted to Caxton and resumed his hurried inquiries, during all of which Akerman and the sergeant of police, as well as the gaping crowd above and below, stood awed and motionless, no sign or token in the face or voice of Felix Boyd indicated that he had advanced the breadth of a hair in his investigation of the tragic mystery.

Meantime the physician was engaged in a more careful examination of the dead man's wounds.

"Do you know what Debbis was doing just before he left his office?" demanded Boyd, still addressing Caxton.

"Yes, sir, I do," said the bookkeeper. "He returned from the Stock Exchange about half an hour ago. Then, as usual he gave up his private office to tabulate and tie up the package of bonds, which we deposit each afternoon in the safe of the Thordyke Trust company, upstairs, where Mr. Debbis rents a private drawer—their vaults are superior to ours. Mr. Debbis always attended to this business immediately after returning from the Exchange, in order to lock up the bonds before the trust company closed for the day."

"Why didn't he send a clerk upstairs with the bonds?" Boyd quickly demanded. "Was it habitual with him to act as his own errand boy?"

"Not exactly that," Caxton hastened to explain. "But he carried the one key of the drawer upstairs, so he always went up with the package. I've been into his private office, sir, and his hat is lying on the desk where he left it. The bonds are gone, however, and I'm sure that he took them out with him as usual, and that whoever killed him also robbed him."

"The bonds are missing, Akerman?" asked Boyd, turning briefly to the detective.

"There's not a sign of them, Mr. Boyd."

"Have you any idea of their value, Mr. Caxton?"

"About one hundred thousand dollars, I should say."

"Was Debbis alone in his private office just before leaving it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hear him speak to any person as he went into the corridor?" asked Boyd, putting question after question with a rapidity that almost staggered his hearers.

"I did not."

"I wish to learn, if possible, whether he encountered any man who mounted these stairs with him."

"I think I can settle that for you, Mr. Boyd," said a gentleman who, in company with Jimmie Coleman, at that moment came through the corridor. "I am Mr. Cushman, of the insurance agency occupying yonder office."

"Make your statement, please," Boyd replied crisply.

"I was talking with a friend at the street door yonder," said Cushman; "and I saw Debbis when he came out of his office and went upstairs. He was bareheaded and entirely alone. I cannot say that he had any package of bonds with him, however. If he did, I think he must have had them under his coat."

"Quite likely," remarked Boyd. "Did you see any person follow him upstairs?"

"None did so," declared Cushman quickly. "Of that I am positive, for I stood facing the stairs and elevator from the time Debbis went up till the alarm was sounded that told us of his violent death. The interval was only two or three minutes."

"Yet in two or three minutes this crime must have been committed," said Boyd decisively. "Did you hear any sounds of a struggle, or of violent blows?"

"None whatever. This distance may have prevented it, however. Yet can swear that no person followed Debbis up these stairs, and that no person came down, either, from the time he went up till we found him dead where you see him."

"Ah!" cried Boyd triumphantly. "A thousand thanks, Mr. Cushman. Your valuable testimony establishes one positive fact. The miscreant who killed and robbed this poor man must have been coming down the stairs, and assaulted Debbis on his way up."

"But that appears equally improb-

able, Mr. Boyd, as two gentlemen up here can testify," said in Akerman.

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